Opening of post offices in Gujarat

†3826. SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have fixed any criteria for opening of post offices;

(b) whether it is a fact that post offices could not be opened in Gujarat until now as per the criteria fixed by Government;

(c) whether Government propose to open few post offices in Gujarat during the current year; and

(d) if so, the names of places where these post offices are proposed to be opened together with their number and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR) : (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) to (d) The opening of post offices is subject to the proposals conforming to prescribed norms. Further it depends upon availability of funds and sanctioning of required posts by Ministry of Finance. The targets for opening of new post offices in Gujarat during the current year are yet to be fixed.

Conversion of telephone exchanges into electronic exchanges in Gujarat

†3827 SHRI BACHANI LEKHRAJ : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) the names of telephone exchanges in Gujarat that are yet to be converted into electronic ones;

(b) whether Government propose to convert them in near future; and

(c) if so, by when and if not, the reasons therefor?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR) : (a) All Telephone Exchanges working in Gujarat Telecom Circle are Electronic.

(b) and (c) Do not arise in view of (a) above.

Alarm system for misuse of ISD/STD

†3828. SHRI SWARAJ KAUSHAL : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have formulated any scheme for developing 'alarm system' to prevent the misuse of I.S.D. and S.T.D. in the country;

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†Original notice of the question was received in Hindi.

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) by when the said system is expected to be started?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR) : (a) and (b) It is proposed to set up fraud management and control centre at Hyderabad as a pilot project. The proposed centre will provide technological solution for the fraud management. This system can prevent illegal use of STD/ISD by screening the list of STD barred numbers, by making profile comparison of the subscriber, monitoring the threshold value of the subscriber etc.

Similar system is being set up by MTNL for their Delhi and Mumbai units.

(c) These centers are likely to be operational by this year end.

Reduction in STD rates

3829. SHRI C. RAMACHANDRAIAH : Will the Minister of COMMUNICATIONS be pleased to state :

(a) whether Government have opened long-distance Telecom to the private sector;

(b) if so, what were the compulsions behind this move;

(c) whether the Telecom Department will allow free competition over rates for STD calls;

(d) whether Telecom Department is artificially charging excessively high rates for STD calls ; and

(e) what steps are proposed to bring down rates for STD calls all over the country?

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF COMMUNICATIONS (SHRI TAPAN SIKDAR) : (a) and (b) Sir, Government has decided to open National Long Distance Telecom Service to the private sector. This is in accordance with the New Telelcom Policy, 1999.

(c) to (e) The power to fix tariff for telecom services has since been vested in the Telecom Regulatory Authority of India by virtue of Sec. 11(2) of the TRAI Act and the Department of Telecom Services have implemented reduction of STD rates by around 20% from 1st May, 1999 as per TRAI's Tariff Order 1999.